RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

On

AN ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY FRAMEWORK OF HOMESTAY IN SIKKIM

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1. INTRODUCTION

In ancient time, people used to travel by walk, bulk cart, palki (Palanquin or Pala keen) and by horse. In that era, travelers used to stay overnight in Temples, Monasteries and villages, and Local food, accommodation offered by priests and villagers without any monetary benefits were very common. Later, Yatri-Niwas, Dharmsala and Sarai were established with nominal charges. In 1632, a Sarai was constructed by Feroz Khan during the reign of Shah Jahan which remains the only important Mughal period 'Sarai. Sarai is a historic wayside inn or halting station where travelers were rest at the end of a day's journey. It can be found all across the country, along major movement corridors. Sarai were used both by common people as well as transiting army troops. Most of the Sarai converted as a city/town or railways station of India, at present no concept of Sarai any more, but origin of homestay based on Sarai. Subsequently, more amenities were made available for the travelers.

The India's famous Sarai early 16th century listed below:-

Sr.No.	Sarai's Names	States	Sr.No	Sarai's Names	States
1.	Ami nagar Sarai	Uttar Pradesh	10.	Mughal Sarai	Punjab
2.	Bal-Sarai	Punjab	11.	Sarai Aquil	Uttar Pradesh
3.	Ber Sarai	Delhi	12.	Sarai Kale Khan	Delhi
4.	Begusarai	Bihar	13.	Sarai Mir	Uttar Pradesh
5.	Sarai Khas	Punjab	14.	Sarai Rohilla	Delhi
6.	Jia Sarai	Delhi	15.	Sarai Shishgaran	Uttar Pradesh
7.	Kheta Sarai	Uttar Pradesh	16.	Salem Sarai	Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh
8.	Laheria Sarai	Bihar	17.	Nam pally Sarai	Andhra Pradesh
9.	Mughal Sarai	Uttar Pradesh	18.	Yusuf Sarai	Delhi

Source: https://www.hindustantimes.com/gurgaon/a-mughal-era-sarai-contested-history-and-murmurs-of-a-curse/story. Retrieved on (2019, oct.08)

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

2. HOMESTAY

In the 21st century, Hospitality & Tourism sectors have become very active industries. Homestay is a popular form of hospitality and lodging, and its combined words (home stay) indicates staying in home with a homeowner's family where tourists will get the opportunity to mingle with the local people, their culture and life style for a short period. But such guests are provided accommodation, food and other services by individual family and community too. In Sikkim homestay movement got early participation from Pastanga village and lately from many villages like Lachen, Kewzing, Yuksom, Rey Mindu, Dzongu, Hee-Bermiok, Naltam, and Lingee Payong. In case of Pastanga, in 1995 more than 45 % households signed up to offer homes to guests and all local communities were encouraged to join in. (Peaty, 2010).The homestay concept was launched in October 2008 by few locals of Zuluk village in Sikkim too. Several ecotourism sites in different parts of the state Kewzing, Yuksam, Dzongu and Pastanga were some of the first community-based tourism (CBT) sites that evolved as a result, and established themselves. The core component of these CBT initiatives was the village homestay, a new tourism product that ensured spread of tourism benefits to local communities. Since then the Government has taken several initiatives to support village tourism and ecotourism including the notification of the Sikkim Ecotourism Policy in year 2012, and the Sikkim Registration of Homestay Establishment Rules 2013. As per Oxford Dictionary, "Guest is a person who is invited to another person's house on a visit or to dine together". The guest and host hold social relationship where a person is invited and entertained as a social obligation or motive. In India there is an ancient Sanskrit saying "ATITHI DEVO BHAVA" meaning the guest is god. The ministry of Indian tourism has launched this Programme called 'Athithi Devo Bhavah' which means guest is god. The inspiration behind this expression is to respect because; respect has always been an essential part of Indian soul. Homestays have established a unique niche in Community Based Tourism (CBT), and is being promoted in many parts of India mainly Kerala in south India and Himalayan states like Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim.

The Homestay seeks to draw tourists away from posh and crowded urban areas to the rural locality, full of splendid natural surroundings, by providing them with clean, comfortable and budget-friendly accommodation and food. Thus, homestay offers the traveler a unique local hospitality experience and

possibilities of interaction with the host family. Other homestay facilities in Sikkim, have grown in recent times such as Orchid homestay, Guras homestay, Chakha homestay, Kothebari homestay and many more.

An important addition to the new ISO 9000:2000 standard has been the measurement of quality service. There are many things that are associated with a guest and those things are being considered factors for guest satisfaction. These factors are also known as determinants of guest satisfaction. Determinants of guest satisfaction can be categorized in different segments of hotels where guests have direct interaction with like Reception and Room facilities, Room Service or In-Room Dining, Bed & Breakfast (F&B) Outlets etc."

Ministry of Tourism, government of India under 'Incredible India' Bed & Breakfast/Homestay facilities gets categorized as follows :-(a) Silver (b) Gold.

Whereas, Kerala Tourism Department is promoting three different categories of homestays in the state: (a) Diamond (b) Gold (c) Silver.

Sikkim Registration of Home Stay Establishment Rules, 2013. Homestay classified in 3 (three) categories on based on facilities and quality of Homestay.

(a) Class A –Gold house (b) Class B-Silver house (c) Class C-Bronze house

2.1 Checklist of Homestay facilities in Sikkim

Table 1 Checklist of Homestay

Sr.No.	Area	Minimum requirement / Facilities	Priority
1	General	License/Registration, Clean & Hygienic environment, Bed room, Bath room, Help desk, All floor surface clean and in good repair, Safety and Security	Necessary
2	Reception area	Seating/lobby area, At the entrance of Homestay, notice board duly painted, name & registration number of Homestay, rooms details, check-in ,check-out time, dining/kitchen open & close time, separate notice board for menu with price, suggestion book, bill book, code & conduct notice board, car/taxi on rent & first aid kit	Necessary

3	Guest rooms	Minimum one let table room and maximum 2,4 beds with Attached toilets; All rooms to have good ventilation, Minimum size of bedroom excluding bathroom has to be 120 sq. ft., clean & change of bed and bath linen daily, Minimum bed width for single is 90 cm and double 120cm ,Mattress minimum 10 cm thick coir, cotton, foam or spring , Minimum bedding 2 sheets, pillow and case, blanket (in air Conditioned rooms), mattress protector/bedcover ,Sufficient Lighting ,A 5 AMP earthed power socket , bedside table and drawer ,writing surface with sufficient lighting Chairs-preferably one per bedding, Wardrobe with minimum 4 cloth hangers per bedding Shelves or drawer space, wastepaper basket ,curtains *or* screening for all windows ,Drinking water,1 glass tumbler per guest , mirror, at least half length (3 feet), do not disturb card, sitting area, bed size 6.5 feet in length, guest luggage area, writing table	Necessary
4	Bathrooms	Minimum size of bathroom 30 sq. ft., western type/Indian WC,1 bath & hand towel per guest, one WC brush, toiletries, one new soap per guest, clothes hook, sanitary bin, toilet paper, hot & cold running 24 hours, water saving taps/shower, floors & walls non-porous surfaces, energy saving lighting, bottled toiletry products	Necessary
5	Public area	Telephone & e-mail service (Desirable), Dining room with quality furniture, Non-plastic crockery & glassware, Cutlery to be stainless steel.	Necessary
6	Kitchen	Refrigerator, daily cleaning of floor & utensils, all food containers, smoke & pest free, ventilation system, purified	Necessary

		drinking water, wet & dry garbage (segregated)	

Source: Sikkim Homestay registration rule, 2013, Annexure III (SGPG-696/Gazette/30Cps/07.12.2013

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

2.2 Common National Standards and Guidelines for classification of Incredible India Bed & Breakfast and Homestay Establishment by Ministry of Tourism (Hotel & Restaurants Division) Government of India.

An Incredible India Bed & Breakfast Establishments and Homestay Establishment is classified following two stage procedure.

a) The presence of facilities and services will be evaluated against the enclosed Checklist. (Checklist will have to be duly filled in online and submitted along with the online application).

b) The quality of facilities and Services will be evaluated by the Regional Classification Committee. Due preference will be accorded to the homes, which are able to provide Indian experience by way of Indian decor, authentic and exotic Indian cuisine etc.

The Regional Classification Committee consists of the following: -

[1] Regional Director, India tourism / Director, India tourism/ Asst. Director, India tourism –Chairman (in case of Director / Asst. Director, India tourism, nomination should be made by the concerned Regional Director)

[2] Representative from IATO (Indian association of tour operators)

[3] Representative from TAAI (Travel agents association of India)

[4] Representative from local Central / State Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) (member of teaching faculty to be nominated by Principal)

[5] Representative from State Tourism Department

National Quality standards & guide lines for classification of India Bed & Breakfast establishment an incredible India Homestay establishment dated 10 Dec.2018 & realised on 03 Jan.2019 by Hotel & Restaurants Division Government of India (Ministry of Tourism).

Note: - The grading in the various categories depends on the quality of accommodation, facilities and services provided. Ministry of Tourism, government of India under 'Incredible India' Bed & Breakfast/Homestay facilities gets categorized as follows:-

(a) Silver (b) Gold.

2.3 Checklist of Homestay establishment and classification by the Ministry of Tourism

Sr.No.	Particulars	Silver	Gold
1	Well maintained and well equipped house and guest rooms with quality carpets / area rugs/ tiles or marble flooring, furniture, fittings etc. in keeping with the traditional lifestyle.	Mandatory	Mandatory
2	Sufficient parking with adequate road width.	Desirable	Mandatory
3	Guest rooms: Minimum one let table room and maximum rooms (12 beds). All rooms should be clean, airy, pest free, without dampness and with outside window / ventilation.	Mandatory	Mandatory
4	Minimum floor area in sq. ft. for each room.		

	• **Plains** • **Hills**	120 Mandatory 100 Mandatory	200 Mandatory 120 Mandatory
5	Comfortable bed with good quality linen & bedding preferably of Indian design	Mandatory	Mandatory
6	Attached private bathroom with every room along with toiletries.	Mandatory	Mandatory
7	Minimum size of each bathroom in sq. ft.	30 Mandatory	40 Mandatory
8	WC toilet to have a seat and lid, toilet paper	Mandatory	Mandatory
9	24 hours running hot & cold water with proper sewerage connection	Mandatory	Mandatory
10	Well maintained smoke free, clean, and hygienic, odour free, and pest free kitchen.	Mandatory	Mandatory
11	Dining area serving fresh continental and / or traditional Indian Breakfast.	Mandatory	Mandatory
12	Good quality cutlery and crockery.	Mandatory	Mandatory
13	Air-conditioning & heating depending on climatic conditions with room temp. Between 20 to 25 degrees centigrade in the offered room.	Mandatory	Mandatory
14	Iron with iron board on request.	Mandatory	Mandatory
15	Internet connection.	Desirable	Mandatory

16	15 amp earthed power socket in the guest room.	Mandatory	Mandatory
17	Telephone with extension facility in the room.	Desirable	Mandatory
18	Wardrobe with at least 4 clothes hangers in the guest room.	Mandatory	Mandatory
19	Shelves or drawer space in the guest rooms	Mandatory	Mandatory
20	Complimentary aqua guard / RO / mineral water.	Mandatory	Mandatory
21	Good quality chairs, working table and other necessary furniture.	Mandatory	Mandatory
22	Washing machines / dryers in the house with arrangements for laundry / dry cleaning services.	Desirable	Mandatory
23	Refrigerator in the room.	Desirable	Mandatory
24	A lounge or seating arrangement in the lobby area.	Desirable	Mandatory
25	Heating and cooling to be provided in enclosed public rooms.	Desirable	Mandatory
26	Garbage disposal facilities as per	Mandatory	Mandatory

	Municipal laws.		
27	Energy Saving Lighting (CFL/ LED) in guest rooms and public areas	Mandatory	Mandatory
28	Acceptance of cash /cheque / D.D.	Mandatory	Mandatory
29	Message facilities for guests.	Mandatory	Mandatory
30	Name, address and telephone number of doctors.	Mandatory	Mandatory
31	Assistance with luggage, on request & Left luggage facilities	Desirable	Mandatory
32	Safekeeping facilities in the room.	Desirable	Mandatory
33	Smoke /heat detectors in the house.	Desirable	Desirable
34	Security guard facilities	Desirable	Mandatory
35	Fire extinguisher / Fire fighting system	Desirable	Mandatory
36	Maintenance of register (physical or electronic format) for guest check-in and check-out records including passport details in case of foreign tourists.	Mandatory	Mandatory

Sources:Shttp://tourism.gov.in/sites/default/files/Other/Approved%20guidelines%20for%20B%26B%20Homestay2018.pdf (retrieved on 18.08.2019) annexure-II

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

3. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Tourism is developing rapidly in the Sikkim state, & Homestay as an alternative means to accommodation are gaining importance. There are a number of villages that have become popular, where Homestay is being promoted by Ministry of Tourism Government of India. During Hospitality career journey researcher observed, most of Homestay operators are not trained in local hospitality skills and are operating without registration by the government, even not procuring customer feedback to maintain and improve service quality (Discussed with guest and homestay operator in Rumtek, 2018). That is why, homestay service quality and guest satisfaction is not up to the mark, and many of the homestay operator fail in improve service quality. Researcher interested in studying this issue in detail, and to explore service quality for Homestay. So that researcher can gain an intellectual joy of working and solving an unresolved problem of Homestay service quality, and for societal benefits of people in Sikkim.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Their expectations (Kotler, Keller, Ancarani, & Costabile, 2014). Common dimensions of satisfaction with service components include: service quality, product quality, price, and location. In SERVQUAL multiple-item scales, five dimensions are identified to measure service quality, including tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy.

One of the many enormous advantages about the Internet is the opportunity for people to express their views or feedback on anything. Social Media sites (GU and Ye, 2014) have a growing influence and hospitality organizations are increasingly taking an active role in interacting with consumers via social media.

Comment Cards are a traditional way of finding about guest satisfaction and experience at a hotel. Comment cards systems have the ability to bring out the guests' feedback during their stay itself if these are handled diligently (Ogle & Fanning, 2013).

In general, homestay is very different, compared to other modes of accommodation such as a hotel, motel or B&B which is normally located in the city or suburban areas whereas the location of the homestay is

normally situated in rural areas where the whole community is still practicing the traditional way of life and embracing strong culture and traditional practices (Salamiah, Othman and Maheran, 2011). The following are main literatures available on the selected area of study.

Satisfaction with the destinations visited by both the local and international tourists differs from one location to the other. This is because every destination has its very own tourist products which are considered unique by the tourists. The issue of satisfaction amongst the local and international tourists is of no difference as the tourism industry can only be developed if efforts for improvement are continuously carried out (Norlida Hanim, et al. 2011).

Bake and Crompton (as quoted in Mageswari and Badaruddin, 2010, p. 803), defined satisfaction as a feeling directed by factors such as social elements and the psychology of a particular individual, such as emotions, behaviour, needs and external aspects like the seasons and social interactions. Researchers have identified many factors contributing to tourist satisfaction. Common factors include quality of services, safety aspects (Norlida Hanim, et al. 2011), John and Ron, 2000), infrastructure facilities (Yeong, et al. 2010), personal factors (Mutinda & Mayaka, 2012), food and beverages (Tak, et al. 2007), fastidiousness (Norlida Hanim, et al. 2011) and so on.

Qualitative techniques collect information on the basis of prearranged standards which are easily measured and are more objective (Neill, 2008). Comment Cards are a traditional way of finding about guest satisfaction and experience at a hotel. Comment card systems have the potential to bring out the guests' feedback during their stay itself if handled diligently. Another method for measuring guest satisfaction is through a "Mystery Guest" or "Mystery Shopper" who is a person posing as a guest to evaluate products and services for a hotel and reports on perceived quality of products and services received during the visit (Neill, 2008).

According to Carmen & Camarcro (2007), organizations can measure customer satisfaction through the number of complaints made by customers, number of returned products or by conducting a customer satisfaction survey that involves customer questions that are meant to establish if they are satisfied with what is offered.(vol.33 no-5pp13-23.)

Furthermore, according to Gustafson et al. (2005), overall customer satisfaction has a positive effect on loyalty in situations where customers are satisfied with products or services been offered.

Naveen Das (2004) pointed out that the delivery of better service rests on the proper diagnosis of customer expectation, satisfaction and employees' behavior in the service industry. Monitoring customer perception by surveys should be an integral part of a firm's activities. By providing proper training to their employees, hotels can deliver better service according to their customer expectations.

Kotler et al. (2003) defined satisfaction as 'a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product or service perceived performance in relation to his or her expectations'.

Bigne, Sanchez and Sanchez (2001) defined satisfaction as a reaction and the outcome of the choice made based on an individual's emotion and inner-being. On top of that, the reactions also refer to the focal point that is usually represented by an object that satisfies the users in a particular destination. These reactions also relate to specific moments that are considered special which are the pre-buying, post-buying and the after effects of using a product or service.

First study of customer effort, expectations and satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is characteristically defined as a post consumption evaluating decision in relation to a specific service or product (Gundersen, Heide and Olsson, 1996).

It is the disconfirmation approach which is used most often to represent guest satisfaction since it relates satisfaction to the variation between a customer's pre-purchase expectations and after purchase perceptions of the service performance in reality (Ramaswamy, 1996).

Guest satisfaction could also be understood as a psychological state experienced by the consumer when confirmed of disconfirmed expectations existing with respect to a specific service transaction or experience (Thompson, 1994).

Knutson (1988) revealed that cleanliness and comfort of room, approach to the property, timely service, safety and security, and employee friendliness are imperative for determination of guest satisfaction.

Since the development of service quality theory (SERVQUAL) by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), service quality has been widely researched and applied in different types of industries. Service quality has been defined as how well a consumer's needs are met and how well the services delivered Based on the tourism literatures, many researchers have suggested that service quality performance could be an appropriate measurement to test tourist satisfaction, because the tourist is likely to be satisfied when a product or service performance is at a desired level.

Customer Satisfaction is the outcome of an assessment that contrasts pre-purchase expectations with perceptions of performance during consumption and post consumption experience (Oliver, 1980).

The above mentioned studies and views indicate that there are gaps in existing research on hospitality and homestay industries and hence this proposed research.

Customer satisfaction has been a prevalent subject in marketing practice and academic research ever since Cardozo's (1965).

4.1 The Association of the Southeast Asia Nation (ASEAN) Homestay quality standard (International)

As of 2013, there are 10 ASEAN Member States (Members of the Association of the Southeast Asia Nations or ASEAN) namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The proposed validity period for the ASEAN Homestay Standard is 3 years. Certified homestays will be reassessed every 3 years to renew their certificates. This will enable the government tourism organization to update and monitor the performance of certified homestays to ensure that they maintain their quality and standard as ASEAN Standard Homestays.

With many of the world's international tourists looking to ASEAN countries for rural tourism, a more systematic development of Homestay will be crucial in creating a 'new brand' of tourist experience, showcasing the rural way of life, offering an affordable form of holiday that contains a high degree of cultural and educational elements. The selling point of the homestay Programme is not the physical entity of the village but more towards the total village experience, where the community and communal activities are strong influential factors. The success of the homestay Programme in the ASEAN region is highly dependent on a strong understanding of the basic requirements of a quality visitor experience from a homestay perspective. Therefore the establishment of ASEAN Homestay standard is necessary, providing an opportunity to standardize a base level understanding of what a homestay is and to establish a minimum standard across all ASEAN member states.

As a form of Community Based Tourism, the homestay concept is currently well accepted as a rural development tool in many ASEAN countries. The homestay Programme can enhance local quality of life through generation of income, support local culture, arts and crafts business, encourages restoration of local and historic sites, and foster nature conservation efforts through community education.

In order to measure the quality and performance of the homestays, The ASEAN Homestay Standard uses 9 main criteria and 27 sub-criteria containing 91 requirements.

Table 2. The criteria and sub-criteria of ASEAN Homestay quality standards

Sr.no	Criteria	Sub-criteria		No. of requirements	Weightage
1.	Host	1.	The village and community	3	05%
		2.	Homestay operator	1	
2.	Accommodation	3.	The house	6	10%
		4.	The bedroom	5	
		5.	The toilet/bathroom	3	
3.	Activities	6.	Village and community based activities	2	20%
		7.	Surrounding activities	2	
		8.	Authenticity	3	
4.	Management	9.	Leadership	1	15%
		10.	Organization	3	
		11.	Database	3	
		12.	Capacity building & training	2	
		13.	Collaboration	1	
5.	Location	14.	Accessibility	2	05%
6.	Hygiene & Cleanliness	15.	House (kitchen, bedroom & toilet)	5	
		16.	Surrounding compound	3	15%
		17.	Food preparation	7	
7.	Safety & Security	18.	Safety training	1	10%
		19.	Safety features for facilities/activities	4	
		20.	Briefing on safety aspects	4	

		21.	Emergency rescue and evacuation	4	
8.	Marketing	22.	Promotion activities	4	10%
		23.	Partnership with tour operators	2	
		24.	Web marketing	2	
9.	Sustainability Principles	25.	Economic sustainability	8	10%
		26.	Environmental sustainability	6	
		27.	Sociocultural sustainability	4	
TOTAL				**91**	**100%**

Source: - www.asean.org (retrieved on 18.08.2019)

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

Table 3 Quality standard and weightage requirements of ASEAN Homestay

Sr.no	Criteria & Weightage	Sub-criteria	Requirements
1	Host (5%)	1. The village &community 2. Homestay operator	1. Located close to nature and cultural attractions, community centre/area in the village. 2. Homestay provider have completed homestay course.

2.	Accommodation (10%)	3. The House	3.Structure of house is in good and safe condition, Design and building materials reflect local Architecture and identity. Separate guest bedroom(s), Minimum one (1) bathroom/toilet for the guest, Electricity supply in the house, Adequate clean water supply inside the house.
		4.The Bedroom	4. Basic amenities such as fan, desk, mini cupboard, Mirror, electric socket, mosquito net or coil, etc. Maximum of four (4) bedrooms allocated to guest, Standard beds with mattresses and pillows, Windows are fitted with a mesh frame, Clean and fresh bed linen for every guest.
		5. The Bathroom/Toilet	5. Sitting or squatting toilet inside or outside, but close the house, Basic toilet and bathroom facilities, Adequate clean water provided at all times.
3.	Activities (20%)	6.Village and community based activities	6. Showcases local resources such as local culture and Heritage, local enterprises, or natural resources. Activities encourage interactive participation between the local community and guests
		7.Surrounding activities	7. Visits attractions in the surrounding areas, Collaborates with surrounding villages in carrying out activities.

		8.Authenticity	8. Community retains its identity, values, and culture language, lifestyle, etc.), Preserve and involve guests in communal activities, Preserve local handcrafts and showcase local performing arts.
4.	Management (15%)	9.Leadership	9. Leader has strong leadership qualities and respected by local community.
		10.Organization	10. Homestay organisation has systematic structure with clear roles, responsibilities and line of communication, Homestay organisation facilitates the empowerment of local women and youths, Homestay organization has support/blessing from village management.
		11.Database	11. Has homestay operator database e.g. home address, number of family members, special talents, knowledge or skills, Has guest database e.g. records of guest arrivals, origin, length of stay, comments, complaints and suggestions from guests, Has updated inventory of tourism resources in the village and surrounding area.
		12. Capacity building & training	12. Has simple manuals and guidelines covering : (Welcoming and guest handling,- Registration, billing and payment, Hygiene and cleanliness, Communication skills Planning, organising and handling of activities, Marketing and promotion, Storytelling and interpretation skills) Training programmes and modules emphasise on 'hands approach 'community to community.

		13. Collaboration	13. With other homestays, private agencies, public agencies, NGOs, institutions of higher learning.
5.	Location (15%)	14. Accessibility	14.Location is accessible to any mode of transportation, Clear signage to guide guests to the homestay
6.	Hygiene & Cleanliness (15%)	15. House (kitchen, bedroom & toilet)	15. All rooms, kitchen and toilets are clean e.g. free of malodour, dirt, dust, and cobwebs, Kitchen floor is clean. Toilet(s), shower tray(s), bath tub(s), well and sinks are clean e.g. free from dirt, stains and malodour, Disinfectants are used in toilets, Soap, shampoo, toilet tissue and clean towels are provided.
		16. Surrounding compound	16. Surrounding compound is litter free, No breeding grounds for mosquitoes, Village beautification and landscaping using local plants.
		17. Food preparation	17. Kitchen is in good, clean condition and well ventilated, Kitchen utensils are in good condition, clean, and kept in a dry place, Presentable plates, glasses, mugs etc. are used in serving meals, Individuals involved in food preparation have good personal hygiene and properly attired, Fresh ingredients used in food preparation are sourced from local suppliers, Served food are properly covered, Have safe drinking water.
7.	Safety & Security (10%)	18. Safety training	18. Safety personnel have undergone basic training in first aid and emergency rescue.
			19. At least 2 safety personnel accompanying guests

		19. Safety features for facilities/activities	during activities, Water-based activity have safety attire/ equipment's, Physical facility have safety features e.g. railings and slip proof flooring, Trails and trekking routes are marked and signposted.
		20. Briefing on safety aspects	20. Briefing on safety aspects prior to taking part in any related activity, Leaflets on safety guidelines and tips are provided, Registering of guests participating in Eco adventure activities e.g. name and contact number
		21. Emergency rescue and evacuation	21. There is a manual for safety procedures and guidelines as part of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), Safety personnel are equipped with emergency/ first aid kit, Safety personnel is equipped with communication equipment, Guests have insurance coverage, Adhere to safety requirements of the respective country.
8.	Marketing (10%)	22. Promotion activities	22. Packages are designed according to target markets needs and expectations, Unique Selling Proposition (USP) of village have been identified, Promotional materials e.g. brochure, interpretative boards and panels have been developed, Cooperation with local government and tour operators for marketing.
		23. Partnership with tour operators	23. Have familiarisation trips e.g. with tour operators and media, Have partnership with prominent tour operators e.g. including them as advisors.
		24. Web marketing	24. Have website and utilise social media to promote homestay and online booking, Village youth are involved in maintaining and updating online promotional materials.

9.	Sustainability Principles (10%)	25. Economic sustainability	25. The homestay organisation employs staff from the local community, Allocates incentives to motivate staff, Provide micro finance to deserving locals, Purchasing, The homestay organisation purchase materials and products from local micro enterprises, Guests are requested to buy locally made goods, Craft sales area within the homestay centre to showcase local products, Local Product/Attraction, Promote local festivals and visits to nearby markets, Offer guests local goods and services e.g. traditional handicraft, food and cultural events.
		26. Environmental sustainability	26. Limit physical impact of guests on sensitive natural and cultural environments, Discourage the participation of guests in activities which could exploit local flora and fauna, Guests are involved in environmental programs such as litter clean ups, adopting nearby beach, forest or river, A code of conduct for guests for interaction with wildlife, Local community is being educated about the importance of conserving biodiversity, Design and construction of tourism facilities and services are environmentally friendly.
		27. Sociocultural sustainability	27. Availability of information corners and cultural displays at the homestay centre and common areas, Guests are being informed on the appropriate behaviour and the need to respect local customs, Local community is educated about the importance of preserving their culture, Ban the participation of commercial sexual activities and illegal drug use

Note- Criteria and weightage of ASEAN Homestay distributed from 100%. Among the all, Activities has more weightage (20%).

Table 4. Qualifying marks percentage of ASEAN Homestay

Sr.No.	Range of Marks %	ASEAN Homestay Rank
1	75-100%	Excellent **(Qualify for ASEAN Homestay)**
2	60-74%	Very Good
3	40-59%	Good
4	20-39%	Fair
5	0-19%	Poor

Source: - www.asean.org (retrieved on 18.08.2019)

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

4.2 Service quality

Service quality is defined as "the degree and direction of discrepancy between consumers' perception and expectations in terms of different but relatively important dimensions of the service quality which can affect their future behavior". Its measurement has been described, as existing along a continuum ranging from ideal quality to totally unacceptable quality with some point along the continuum representing satisfactory quality. The dimensions and indicators of service quality are reliability, empathy, courtesy, communication and competence. In the present study the service quality is measured with the help of nineteen variables. They are respond promptly, understand needs, respectful, polite, neat, keep promises,

error free records, easy to contact, schedule meet needs, personal attention, respectful, confidence, problem handling, convenient apt, right in first, willing to help, training, don't talk dam and timely service.

The term Quality, is defined jointly by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the American Society of Quality (ASQ) as "the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy given needs". Quality in service is very important especially for the growth and development of service sector business enterprises (Powell, 1995). It works as an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Ruyter and Bloemer 1995).

In the past, quality was measured only for the tangible products because of less dominance of service sector. Due to the increasing importance of service sector in the economy, the measurement of service quality became important. Hotel is essentially a high contact service industry and there is a close interaction between service provider and the guest.

There are two critical thresholds affecting the link between customer satisfaction and service quality. On the high side, when satisfaction reaches a certain level, loyalty increases dramatically, at the same time when satisfaction declines to a certain point, loyalty drops equally dramatically.

The quality in products could be gained whenever the users feel satisfied and believe the products could fulfill their needs. On the other hand, the service quality could be different because it is based on perception upon the users receiving the services. In addition, the service cannot be maintained as production as it comes from the good or poor performance served by the organization.

There are two perspectives of quality measurement: internal and external. According to internal perspective, it is defined as zero defects, doing it right the first time, or conformance to requirements. The external perspective understands this aspect it in terms of customer perception, customer expectation, customer satisfaction, customer attitude and customer delight.

An ISO standard is one of the measurement tools of service quality, where quality is defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a product, process or service. Crossby (1979), a renowned researcher in service quality defined it as the 'conformance to requirements'.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry"s (1988) conceptualized the service quality into five dimensions: Tangibles (T), Reliability (R), Responsiveness (R), Assurance (A), and Empathy (E), which eventually led to the development of SERVQUAL.

Table 5 The dimensions are:-

Tangibles	Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel.
Reliability	Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Responsiveness	Willingness to help customers and prompt service.
Assurance	Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
Empathy	Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.

Gronroos (1982)48 stated that quality can be understood by understanding the three core service performance component structures, such as technical, functional and reputational quality.

There are many things that are associated with a guest and those things are being considered as factors for guest satisfaction. These factors are also known as the determinants of guest satisfaction which can be categorized in different segments of homestay like Reception and Room Facilities, Service, Amenities and local hospitality skills.

Caruana (2002) 32 mentioned that service quality, customer satisfaction and service loyalty are related to each other.

4.3 Lodging quality index

Lodging quality index (LQI) was built based on SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, 1988). From this main structure and eight-step procedure of Churchill (1979), Getty and Thompson (1994a) developed the lodging quality scale.

With the appearance and appreciation of SERVQUAL scale of Parasuraman in 1988 with five dimensions, researchers one more time collected data and computed again all the items and coefficient based on the new SERVQUAL scale. In the end, the final lodging quality index with 5 dimensions and 26 items was born and has been used until now. Five dimensions are tangible, reliability (includes original reliability and credibility dimensions), responsiveness, confidence (includes original competence, courtesy, security and access dimensions) and communication (includes original communication and understanding dimensions). They are different with the five dimension of SERVQUAL (include tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) and they are considered more suitable to evaluate some unique features of the hotel industry.

Table 6. Lodging quality index (26-items)

Sr.No.	Dimension	Scale item
1	Tangibility	1. The front desk was visually appealing 2. The employees had clean, neat uniforms 3. The restaurant's atmosphere was inviting 4. The shops were pleasant and attractive 5. The outdoor surroundings were visually attractive 6. The hotel was bright and well lighted 7. The hotel's interior and exterior were well maintained 8. The hotel was clean
2	Reliability	1. My reservation was handled efficiently 2. My guest room was ready as promised 3. TV, radio, A/C, lights, and other mechanical equipment worked properly 4. I got what I paid for
3	Responsiveness	1. Employees responded promptly to my requests 2. Informative literature about the hotel was provided 3. Employees were willing to answer my questions 4. Employees responded quickly to solve my problems 5. Room service was prompt
4	Confidence	1. Employees knew about local places of interest 2. Employees treated me with respect 3. Employees were polite when answering my questions 4. The hotel provided a safe environment 5. The facilities were conveniently located
5	Communication	1. Charges on my account were clearly explained 2. I received undivided attention at the front desk 3. Reservationists tried to find out my particular needs

		4. Employees anticipated my needs
	Total Dimension 05	**Total items 26**

Source: "Lodging quality index (LQI): assessing customers' perceptions of quality delivery", Juliet M. Getty and Robert L. Getty, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management 15/2 [2003]

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

4.4 Service quality gap

Customers judge service quality on the basis of their expectations. They view a firm's service quality by comparing their perception of service experiences with their expectations of what the service performance should be. A service quality gap results when service perception fall short of expectations. These gaps, which can impede the delivery of services that consumers perceive to be of high quality, are as follows:

[1] The gap between the consumer expectation and the management perception of consumer expectation.

[2] The gap between the management perceptions of the consumers' expectations and service quality specifications.

[3] The gap between service quality specifications and the service actually delivered.

[4] The gap between the service delivery and what is communicated about the service to the consumers.

[5] The gap between the perceived service and the expected service.

The service quality gap is measured with the help of the SERVQUAL instrument. In this study service quality gap is identified by measuring the gap between the guest' perception and expectation through four important factors such as room features services, food related services and external factors.

Schaaf (1997)46 found that the SERQUAL GAPs are caused by the difference between the customer expectations and perception. The customers create their perception of what to expect based on four factors, namely word of mouth communication, personal needs, past experiences and communication put out by the service provider.

Table 7. Score sheet of Homestay in Sikkim State

Sr.No	Criteria	Maximum marks	Allocation of marks
1	Location	10	Place of Tourist attraction - 6 , Located at scenic place – 4
2	Exterior & Surroundings	10	Exterior Environments – 4 , Approach – 1 , Land Escaping – 2 , Exterior Lighting – 2 , Parking – 1
3	Types of Building	8	Heritage Building/Farm House – 8 New Construction in Traditional Architecture – 6 , Normal RCC Structure – 4 , Old Tiled houses without much heritage value – 4
4	Guest room	12	Furniture – 6 , Furnishing – 2 , Décor – 2 , Room Facilities and Amenities – 2
5	Bath room	8	Facilities – 2 , Lighting – 2 , Linen – 2 , Toiletries-2
6	Public area	4	Furniture and Furnishing -2 , Décor – 2
7	Food	6	Traditional Food – 2, Choice of food -2 , Food Quality-2
8	Kitchen	6	Cleanliness-2 , State of repair – 2 , Food and storage – 2
9	Cleanliness	10	Overall Impression – 10
10	Hygiene	10	Overall Impression - 10
11	Safety & Security	4	Public Area and Room Security -2 , Signage -2
12	Communication	2	Phone Service – 1 , Internet Access -1

13	Eco friendly practices	10	Waste Management , Recycle & No Plastics – 5 Water Conservation , Harvesting – 2 , Pollution control - Air, Water , Sound , Light – 2 , Alternative Energy usage -1
Total Marks/Scores		**100**	

Source: Sikkim Homestay registration rule, 2013, Annexure III (SGPG-696/Gazette/30Cps/07.12.2013

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

Table 7.1 Classification and rank of Homestay as per Marks/Scores in Sikkim

Sr.No.	Range of Scores/Marks	Rank of Homestay
1	75-100	Class A - Gold
2	60-74	Class B – Silver
3	50-59	Class C – Bronze
4	0-49 (Less than 50)	Not Qualified

Source: Sikkim Homestay registration rule, 2013, Annexure III (SGPG-696/Gazette/30Cps/07.12.2013

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

Sikkim Registration of Home Stay Establishment Rules, 2013. Homestay classified in 3 (three) categories on based on facilities of Homestay.

(a) Class A –Gold house (b) Class B-Silver house (c) Class C-Bronze house

This classification valid for 2 (two) years from the date of issue the order from department of tourism, Govt. of Sikkim. Homestay function for minimum period of 5 (five) years as registered under DoT (Department of Tourism) considers for up gradation.

8. SCORE SHEET OF HOMESTAY IN KERALA

Sr.No.	Criteria	Max Marks	Allocation of Marks
1	Location	12	Places of tourist attraction (8), Located at scenic place/farm/estate (4)
2	Exterior & surroundings	10	Exterior environment (4), Approach (1), Landscaping (2), Exterior lighting (2) Parking (1)
3	Type of Building	8	Heritage building, Farm houses, Estate bungalows (8), New construction in traditional architecture (6), Normal RCC structure (4), Old tiled houses without much heritage value (4)
4	Guest Rooms	12	Furniture (6), Furnishings (2), Décor (2), Room facilities & amenities (2)
5	Public Areas	4	Furniture and Furnishings (2), Décor (2)
6	Food	6	Traditional cuisine (2), Choice of cuisine (2), Food quality (2)
7	Kitchens	6	Cleanliness (2), State of repair (2), Food storage (2)
8	Cleanliness	10	Overall impression
9	Hygiene	10	Overall impression
10	Safety & Security	4	Public area and room security (2), Signage (2)
11	Communications	2	Phone service (1), Internet access (1)
12	Eco – friendly practices	8	Waste management, recycling, no plastics (4), Water conservation, Harvesting (1), Pollution control – air, water, sound, light (2), Alternative energy usage (1)
Total Score		**100**	

8.1 Classification and rank of Homestay as per scores in Kerala

Sr.No.	Range of Marks	Rank of Homestay
1	75-100	Class A – Diamond House
2	60-74	Class B – Gold House
3	50-59	Class C – Silver House
4	0-49 (Less than 50)	Not Qualified

Source: http://homestaykerala.net/homestay_classification.html (retrieved on 10.10.2019)

Short Note: - Compiled by researcher from original source

The Classification Scheme is implemented through the Department of Tourism Government of Kerala, based on the facilities and quality of the accommodation provided by Homestay. Class A category the Diamond House, Class B category the Gold House and Class C category the Silver House status.

The committee for the classification of Homestays is constituted district-wise and State level too. The Committee for classification of Homestay units constituted by the Government for the purpose to visit the unit, and if found satisfactory with the facilities, recommend the Department of Tourism for the classification of the unit. Here, the order on classification will be issued by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala.

5. RESEARCH GAP

From the review of literature the following facts have been found out by researcher:-

The researcher of this study found that, there is a research gap in the Service quality of Homestay in Sikkim, However concern research papers have been published in journal, highlighting Homestay in contest of CBT. No researcher has measured the guidelines to operate Homestay, and about local hospitality skills in Sikkim state. In India, service quality research in hospitality has not taken as a serious concern. Only a limited research is found in service quality of hotels and restaurants. The reason for lack of research may be due to the awareness and willingness of hotels towards service quality. Though there are some studies on service quality index with regards to hotel industry and other service sector, but homestay domain is relatedly not explored, particularly in Sikkim state. There are a few literature/research found in

this area, but they lack depth in study on homestay service quality and different kinds of benefits to the guest in during stay. Hence, it has been decided to do a research on Homestay service quality parameters in the Sikkim state to fill the gap.

This fact motivated the researcher to carry out the research on Service quality of Homestay in Sikkim.

6. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

India's service sector covers a wide variety of activities with different features and dimensions. They include trade, hotel and restaurants, transport, communication, financing, insurance, real estate, social and personal services. The hospitality industry is very broad service industry which focused on guest satisfaction and Service quality plays a vital role in the hospitality industry. It is essential for hospitality personnel to know what guest expect, because it leads to guest satisfaction.

For providing service quality, homestay operator should remove all the gaps and essential to understand what they actually wants and where the need of improvement is.

So the researcher defined problem as:-

'What are the service quality gaps with respect to different dimensions of the products and services provided by homestay, and how these gaps can be reduced and developed the service quality?'

So this study is intended to identify all service quality gaps in the homestay of Sikkim State with the help of well-structured questionnaire as per the need of study.

7. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

[1] To review the quality frame work of Homestay in Sikkim.

[2] To assess the existing service quality standard of Homestay in Sikkim.

[3] To determine the factors which effects service quality of Homestay in Sikkim.

[4] To compare existing service quality of Homestay in Sikkim with international standard.

[5] To suggest measures / a comprehensive framework to improve service quality of Homestay in Sikkim State.

8. FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Steps	Things to be observed
1	Detail understanding of service quality framework of Homestay Sikkim (National & International)
2	Cross comparative study of quality framework of national & international standard with that of

	existing quality of Homestay service in Sikkim.
3	Developing a comprehensive framework of Homestay services.
4	Examination of secondary data & information collected to homestay in Sikkim.
5	Primary data & field observation, to know the existing scenario of present quality frame of Homestay in Sikkim.
6	Determining the factors affecting of the service quality in Homestay.

9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study considers all the Homestays in Sikkim, (including Registered & Non-registered homestays). Homestay visitors/guests who would be checking out (who stayed) intercepted to participate through questionnaires (Personal interview and online survey). Quantitative & qualitative research approach would be used for the study, for the purpose of data and information would be collected from primary and secondary sources.

Primary data would be collected by stratified random sampling process. Secondary data sources are various Govt reports, several online data sources, books, and journals, literature review section of the research statistical information from the Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India, Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, and other website.

Table 9.1 Snap shot of the study by the researcher

Steps	Work to be observed	Data types & Sources	Methods
1	Detail understanding of quality framework of Homestay (National & International)	Secondary data & Online data, books, journals, literature review section of the research, Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India, Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, and other website & ASEAN Homestay Standard.	Literature survey and study.

2	Cross comparative study of quality framework of national & international standard with that of existing quality of homestay service in Sikkim.	Primary data & Secondary data, Field observation (Registered & Non-Registered Homestay) through questionnaires (Personal interview and online survey) & Online data, books, journals, literature review section of the research, Ministry of Tourism, the Government of India, Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, and other website & ASEAN Homestay Standard.	Comparative study.
3	Examination of secondary data & information related to Homestay in Sikkim state.	Secondary data & information Collected from reports and publications of Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim.	By Different statistical tools as per the need of the study.
4	To know the existing scenario of present quality frame of Homestay in Sikkim.	Primary data & Field observation (Registered & Non-Registered Homestay) through questionnaires (Personal interview and online survey).	Questionnaires, Personal interview, field observation and online survey.
5	Determining the factors affecting of the service quality in Homestay	Secondary data & Department of Tourism, Government of Sikkim, and other website.	SERQUAL Model.

9.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a framework or blue print for conducting a research. Since the present study focuses on the service quality offered by homestay operator or host family in Sikkim, the most appropriate method would be quantitative research. The primary & secondary data would be analyzed to examine the service quality of homestay of Sikkim.

9.3 Data types and sources

(a) Primary Data: Through questionnaires/interviews, case studies and researcher's observation.

(b) Secondary Data: Books, Policy Papers, Journals, statistical information from the Ministry of Tourism Government of India, Department of Tourism Government of Sikkim and other websites.

9.4 Sample Design

As ample design is the framework or road map, that serves as the basis for the selection of a survey sample and affects many other important aspects of a survey as well. For this study researcher would use stratified random sampling.

9.5 Statistical tools and Methods

Researcher would collect the data from various sources, data would be tabulated and analyzed with the help of appropriate statistical tools as per the need of the study.

10. SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA

There were no recent exclusive studies about the service quality of Homestay in Sikkim. It has both industrial growth as well as tourism growth, and it provides ample opportunity for hospitality (Homestay) industry to grow by leaps, and bounds. Hence, better and valid responses would be received. In this research, registered Homestays by Sikkim tourism & non- registered homestays would be taken into account, Homestay which is under project excluded from the study. Total number of Homestay are 1182 in Sikkim State**.**

11. HOTEL & OTHER ACCOMMODATION ESTABLISHMENTS IN SIKKIM

Sr.No.	Districts	Hotels & Lodges	Homestay	Guest House	OYO	Star Category Hotels			Grand Total Hotels & other Accommodation establishments in
1	North	140	55	02	09	Star Category	5*Deluxe	1	
2	East	627	520	01	65		5*	4	
3	South	90	326	03	07		4*	4	

							3*	8	
4	West	210	281	03	06		2*	9	
Total		**1067**	**1182**	**09**	**87**			**26**	**2371**

Source**:** Mr. Nirmal Ciatury A.D tourism dep. Govt. of Sikkim (06/08/2019) and OYO website retrieved on (04/08/2019)

Short Note: - Compiled by Researcher from original source

The data furnished above, it is evident that the total number of hotels & other accommodation establishments available in Sikkim state (Reg. with DoT & CAV, GMC & FHRAI).

11.1 Registered & Non-Registered Homestay in Sikkim (updated summary till 30th June 2019)

Sr.No	Districts	Registered Homestay with DoT	Non-Registered Homestay with DoT	Grand Total Homestay In Sikkim State
1	North	45	10	
2	East	422	98	
3	South	185	141	
4	West	183	98	
Total		**835**	**347**	**1182**

Sour**ce**: Mr. Karma & Mr. Nirmal Ciatury Assistant director (06/08/2019) Sikkim tourism

Short Note:-Compiled by Researcher from original source

The data furnished above, it is evident that, the total number of registered Homestay by DoT & CAV & Non-registered with DoT & CAV in Sikkim State (70% Homestay Reg. & 30% Non-Reg.).

11.2 Sample size selection for Registered Homestay in Sikkim

Sample size reflecting 264 only as sample for the study, for 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error. Proportionate sample selection has been done for registered homestay.

Sr.No	Districts	Registered Homestay with DoT	Districts wise proportionate population	Sample size Districts wise	Total Registered & Non-Registered Homestay in Sikkim State
1	North	45	05	13	
2	East	422	50	134	
3	South	185	23	59	
4	West	183	22	58	
Total		**835**	**100**	**264**	**1182**

Short Note:-Compiled by researcher

Sample size is farther sub divided in to four strata according to distribution of population (Homestay by applying on the basis of stratified random sampling).

Total Homestay 1182, and registered 835 with Department of Tourism Sikkim.

11.3 Sample size selection for Non-registered Homestay in Sikkim

Sample size reflecting 183 only as sample for the study, for 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error. Proportionate sample selection has been done for non-registered homestay.

Sr.No	Districts	Non-Registered Homestay with DoT	Districts wise proportionate population	Sample size Districts wise	Total Registered & Non-Registered Homestay in Sikkim State
1	North	10	02	03	
2	East	98	29	53	
3	South	141	41	75	
4	West	98	28	52	
Total		**347**	**100**	**183**	**1182**

Short Note:-Compiled by researcher

Sample size is farther sub divided in to four strata according to distribution of population (Homestay by applying on the basis of stratified random sampling).

Total Homestay 1182, and non-registered 347 with Department of Tourism Sikkim.

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